Dr. Doak Cox's long and illustrious career spanned 60 years and included positions with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA), and the University of Hawaii.

Cox was with the University of Hawaii from 1960 to his retirement in 1985 and was an Emeritus faculty member until his death in 2003. Cox was born in Wailuku, Maui, in 1917 but spent much of his childhood on the island of Kauai. He graduated from the University of Hawaii with a BS degree in Physics and Mathematics in 1938. He then moved to the mainland for graduate work at Harvard University, where he received his MA degree in Geology in 1941.

Following completion of his MA degree, he was employed by the USGS as a field geologist. In 1946, he was offered a position with the Hawaii Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) to direct their Geology Department and conduct research on geology, hydrology, and water resource development in Hawaii. In 1960 he left HSPA and officially became a faculty member at the University of Hawaii where he was appointed to the rank of professor in the Department of Geology and Geophysics and was put in charge of the Tsunami Research Program at the Hawaii Institute of Geophysics.

Cox served on the organizing committee for the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center in 1964 and was appointed its first director. He spent the formative years of WRRC developing long-term goals and the research agenda. Some of the investigations undertaken during Cox’s tenure at WRRC include the behavior of pesticides with percolating water, development of monitoring wells in the Pearl Harbor aquifer, use of radio soundings to explore groundwater in the islands, and study of estuarine pollution in Kaneohe Bay, an activity which eventually led to the placement of a deep-ocean outfall pipe outside the bay in the early 1970s.

Cox was instrumental in developing the Environmental Center and became its first director in 1970. The Environmental Center, a program of WRRC, is a leader in research on Hawaii’s environmental impact statement system and in the development of the Environmental Studies Program. He headed the Center until his retirement in 1985.

Cox held many honorary positions. He was active with the Hawaiian Academy of Sciences for over 50 years and served as president of that organization in 1958–59 and again in 1984–85. From 1960 to 1962 he was a councilor of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. From 1964 to 1972 he was a member of the Alaska Earthquake Committee and chair of the Oceanography Panel for the National Academy of Sciences. He was appointed to the Governor’s State Water Commission from 1977 to 1979. He also was a member of the Hawaii Water Commission in 1980–81. Cox was a charter member of the Conservation Council and was an active member of the board and select committees since its establishment in Hawaii.
In April 1985, he received the prestigious award for Conservation Achievement given by the National Wildlife Federation and the Conservation Council of Hawaii. Cox’s many accomplishments were formally recognized in 1985 by his receipt of the Governor’s Award for distinguished service to the University and State of Hawaii. This award was given …to recognize an individual who has excelled and provided leadership of an extraordinary nature, in a multiplicity of fields and endeavors. Throughout his long and productive work efforts, his exceptional perception and personal expertise have provided guidance over a broad spectrum of academic, governmental and societal issues that has resulted in significant long term benefits both to the State of Hawaii and the world.

Dr. Cox passed away on April 21, 2003 and is fondly remembered by many WRRC alumni and his brother Richard.